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Environment and sustainable development: International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

Report of the Second Committee*

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I. Introduction

1. The Second Committee held a substantive debate on agenda item 94 (see A/58/484, para. 2). Action on sub-item (e) was taken at the 24th, 27th and 37th meetings, on 3 and 6 November and 11 December 2003. An account of the Committee's consideration of the sub-item is contained in the relevant summary records (A/C.2/58/SR.24, 27 and 37).

II. Consideration of proposals

A. Draft resolutions A/C.2/58/L.10 and A/C.2/58/L.72

2. At the 24th meeting, on 3 November, the representative of Morocco, on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of 77 and China, Japan and Mexico, introduced a draft resolution entitled "International Strategy for Disaster Reduction" (A/C.2/58/L.10). Subsequently, Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Switzerland, Tajikistan and the United States of America joined in sponsoring the draft resolution, which read as follows:

"*The General Assembly*,

"*Recalling* its resolutions 44/236 of 22 December 1989, 49/22 A of 2 December 1994, 49/22 B of 20 December 1994, 53/185 of 15 December 1998, 54/219 of 22 December 1999, 56/195 of 21 December 2001 and 57/256 of 20 December 2002 and Economic and Social Council resolution 1999/63 of 30 July 1999, and taking note of Council resolution 2001/35 of 26 July 2001,

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"*Emphasizing* that disaster reduction, including reducing vulnerability to natural disasters, is an important element that contributes to the achievement of sustainable development,

"*Noting* the relevant provisions of the Ministerial Declaration of the Ministerial Conference of the Third World Water Forum, held at Kyoto, Japan, on 22 and 23 March 2003, on water-related disasters,

"*Reiterating* that, although natural disasters damage the social and economic infrastructure of all countries, the long-term consequences of natural disasters are especially severe for developing countries and hamper the achievement of their sustainable development,

"*Recognizing* the urgent need to further develop and make use of the existing scientific and technical knowledge to reduce vulnerability to natural disasters, and emphasizing the need for developing countries to have access to technology so as to tackle natural disasters effectively,

"*Expressing its deep concern* at the increasing number and scale of natural disasters within recent years, which have resulted in massive loss of life and long-term negative social, economic and environmental consequences for vulnerable societies throughout the world, in particular in developing countries,

"1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction;

"2. *Invites* Governments and relevant international organizations to consider disaster risk assessment as an integral component of development plans and poverty eradication programmes;

"3. *Stresses* that continued interaction, coordination and partnerships among the institutions concerned are considered essential to address effectively the impact of natural disasters;

"4. *Recognizes* the importance of linking disaster risk management to regional frameworks, as appropriate, such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development, to address issues of poverty eradication and sustainable development;

"5. *Also recognizes* the importance of taking measures to integrate a gender perspective in the design and implementation of disaster reduction strategies to improve their effectiveness;

"6. *Further recognizes* the importance of early warning as an essential element of disaster reduction, and underscores the outcome of the Second International Conference on Early Warning, held at Bonn, Germany from 16 to 18 October 2003, which provides a substantive contribution to the review of the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World: Guidelines for Natural Disaster Prevention, Preparedness and Mitigation and its Plan of Action;

"7. *Decides* to convene the Second World Conference on Disaster Reduction in 2005 with the following objectives:

"(a) To conclude the review of the Yokohama Strategy and its Plan of Action, with a view to updating the guiding framework on disaster reduction for the twenty-first century;

"(b) To identify specific activities and means of implementation aimed at ensuring the fulfilment of relevant provisions of the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development ("Johannesburg Plan of Implementation") on vulnerability, risk assessment and disaster management;

"(c) To share best practices and lessons learned to tackle natural disasters within the context of attaining sustainable development;

"(d) To increase awareness of the importance of disaster reduction policies, thereby facilitating and promoting the implementation of those policies;

"*8. Accepts with deep appreciation* the generous offer of the Government of Japan to host the Conference, and decides that the Conference will be held at Kobe, Hyogo, Japan, from 18 to 22 January 2005;

"9. *Decides* to establish an open-ended intergovernmental preparatory committee for the Conference to review the organizational and substantive preparations for the Conference, to approve the programme of work of the Conference and to propose rules of procedure for adoption by the Conference, and also decides that the preparatory committee will meet at Geneva following the 2004 semi-annual session of the Inter-Agency Task Force for Disaster Reduction and will hold a one-day meeting at Kobe;

"10. *Further decides* that the intergovernmental preparatory committee will have a bureau consisting of five representatives of Member States elected on the basis of equitable geographical representation;

"11. *Requests* the inter-agency secretariat for the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction to serve as the secretariat of the Conference and to coordinate preparatory activities, in close cooperation with the host country and the preparatory committee for the Conference, with the full support of the relevant departments of the Secretariat;

"12. *Invites* Member States, all United Nations bodies and specialized agencies and other relevant intergovernmental agencies and organizations, in particular the members of the Inter-Agency Task Force for Disaster Reduction, to participate actively in the Conference, as well as its preparatory process;

"13. *Welcomes* contributions from all regions that could provide substantive inputs to the preparatory process and the Conference itself;

"14. *Encourages* effective contributions from major groups, as identified in Agenda 21, and invites them to seek accreditation to the Conference and its preparatory process and decides that their accreditation and participation will be in accordance with the rules of procedure of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the rules of procedure of the World Summit of Sustainable Development and the established practice of the Commission on the participation and engagement of major groups;

"15. *Decides* that the preparatory process and the Conference itself should be funded through existing budgetary resources, without negatively affecting programmed activities, and through voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund for the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction;

"16. *Encourages* the international community to provide the necessary financial resources to the Trust Fund and to provide the necessary scientific,

technical, human and other resources to ensure adequate support for the activities of the inter-agency secretariat for the Strategy and the Inter-Agency Task Force for Disaster Reduction and its working groups, as well as to facilitate the preparations for the Conference;

"17. *Expresses its appreciation* to those countries that have provided financial support for the activities of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction by making voluntary contributions to its Trust Fund;

"18. *Requests* the Secretary-General to allocate adequate financial and administrative resources, within existing resources, for the effective functioning of the inter-agency secretariat for the Strategy;

"19. *Requests also* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session a report on the implementation of the present resolution, in particular on the state of preparations for the World Conference, under the item entitled 'Environment and sustainable development'."

3. At the same meeting, the representative of Japan made a statement (see A/C.2/58/SR.24).

4. At the 37th meeting, on 11 December, the Vice-Chairperson of the Committee, Irena Zubčević (Croatia), introduced a draft resolution entitled "International Strategy for Disaster Reduction" (A/C.2/58/L.72), which she submitted on the basis of informal consultations held on draft resolution A/C.2/58/L.10.

5. At the same meeting, the Vice-Chairperson orally corrected operative paragraph 8 of the draft resolution, by inserting the word "Hyogo" after the word "Kobe".

6. Also at the same meeting, the Director of the Division of General Assembly and Economic and Social Council Affairs read out a statement of the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/C.2/58/L.72 (see A/C.2/58/SR.37).

7. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.2/58/L.72 as orally corrected (see para. 15, draft resolution I).

8. After the adoption of the draft resolution, the representative of Japan made a statement.

9. In the light of the adoption of draft resolution A/C.2/58/L.72, draft resolution A/C.2/58/L.10 was withdrawn by its sponsors.

B. Draft resolutions A/C.2/58/L.25 and A/C.2/58/L.67

10. At the 27th meeting, on 6 November, the representative of Morocco, on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of 77 and China, introduced a draft resolution entitled "Natural disasters and vulnerability" (A/C.2/58/L.25), which read:

"*The General Assembly*,

"*Recalling* its decision 57/547 of 20 December 2002,

"*Taking into account* the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on

Sustainable Development, adopted by the World Summit, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 26 August to 4 September 2002,

"*Recognizing* the substantial increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events and associated natural disasters, and expressing concern that this trend is likely to continue in the future,

"*Expressing its deep concern* at the enormous negative impact of extreme weather events and associated natural disasters, which continues to hinder social and economic progress, in particular of developing countries, including small island developing States, which bear a disproportionate share of the burden of economic, social and environmental consequences of disasters,

"*Taking into account* the various ways and forms in which all countries, in particular the more vulnerable developing countries, are being exposed to extreme weather events of global reach, such as the El Niño phenomenon,

"*Noting* that the global environment continues to suffer, thus creating additional vulnerabilities, in particular to developing countries,

"*Taking into account* that extreme weather events and associated natural disasters and their reduction must be dealt with in a coherent manner,

"1. *Takes note* of the separate section on the negative impacts of extreme weather events and associated natural disasters on vulnerable countries, in particular developing countries, contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, as requested by the Assembly in its decision 57/547;

"2. *Urges* the international community to continue to address ways and means, including through the promotion of cooperation and technical assistance, to reduce the adverse effects of natural disasters, including extreme weather events, in particular in vulnerable countries, through the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, which provides a framework for collaboration on the development of methodologies to systematically characterize, measure, assess and respond to natural disasters, including weather-related disasters, hazards and vulnerabilities, and encourages the Inter-Agency Task Force for Disaster Reduction to continue its work in this regard;

"3. *Encourages* the Inter-Agency Task Force for Disaster Reduction, to enhance the coordination on the promotion of disaster reduction as well as to make available to the secretariats of the relevant United Nations entities information on options for natural disasters reduction, including weather-related disasters, hazards and vulnerabilities;

"4. *Encourages* the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the parties to the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to continue to address the adverse effects of climate change, especially in those developing countries that are particularly vulnerable, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, and also encourages the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to continue to assess the adverse effects of climate change on the socio-economic and natural systems of developing countries;

"5. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session on the implementation of the present resolution in a separate section of his report on the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction."

11. At the 37th meeting, on 11 December, the Vice-Chairperson of the Committee, Irena Zubčević (Croatia), introduced a draft resolution entitled "Natural disasters and vulnerability" (A/C.2/58/L.67), which she submitted following informal consultations held on draft resolution A/C.2/58/L.25.

12. At the same meeting, the Vice-Chairperson made oral corrections to the draft resolution.

13. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.2/58/L.67 as orally corrected (see para. 15, draft resolution II).

14. In the light of the adoption of draft resolution A/C.2/58/L.67, draft resolution A/C.2/58/L.25 was withdrawn by its sponsors.

III. Recommendations of the Second Committee

15. The Second Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolutions:

Draft resolution I
International strategy for disaster reduction

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 44/236 of 22 December 1989, 49/22 A of 2 December 1994, 49/22 B of 20 December 1994, 53/185 of 15 December 1998, 54/219 of 22 December 1999, 56/195 of 21 December 2001 and 57/256 of 20 December 2002 and Economic and Social Council resolution 1999/63 of 30 July 1999, taking note of Council resolution 2001/35 of 26 July 2001, and taking into due consideration its resolution 57/270 B of 23 June 2003 on integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields,

Recalling also the inclusion of the item "disaster management and vulnerability" in the multi-year programme of work of the Commission on Sustainable Development,

Emphasizing that disaster reduction, including reducing vulnerability to natural disasters, is an important element that contributes to the achievement of sustainable development,

Noting the relevant provisions of the ministerial declaration of the Ministerial Conference of the Third World Water Forum, held at Kyoto, Japan, on 22 and 23 March 2003, on water-related disasters,

Reiterating that, although natural disasters damage the social and economic infrastructure of all countries, the long-term consequences of natural disasters are especially severe for developing countries and hamper the achievement of their sustainable development,

Recognizing the urgent need to further develop and make use of the existing scientific and technical knowledge to reduce vulnerability to natural disasters, and emphasizing the need for developing countries to have access to technology so as to tackle natural disasters effectively,

Expressing its deep concern at the number and scale of natural disasters and their increasing impact within recent years, which have resulted in massive loss of life and long-term negative social, economic and environmental consequences for vulnerable societies throughout the world, in particular in developing countries,

Recognizing the need to continue to develop an understanding of, and to address, socio-economic activities that exacerbate the vulnerability of societies to natural disasters and to build and further strengthen community capability to cope with disaster risks,

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction;[1]

2. *Invites* Governments and relevant international organizations to consider disaster risk assessment as an integral component of development plans and poverty eradication programmes;

3. *Stresses* that continued cooperation and coordination among Governments, the United Nations system, other international organizations, regional organizations, non-governmental organizations and other partners, as appropriate, are considered essential to address effectively the impact of natural disasters;

4. *Recognizes* the importance of linking disaster risk management to regional frameworks, as appropriate, such as with the New Partnership for Africa's Development,[2] to address issues of poverty eradication and sustainable development;

5. *Also recognizes* the importance of integrating a gender perspective as well as of engaging women in the design and implementation of all phases of disaster management, particularly in the disaster reduction stage;

6. *Further recognizes* the importance of early warning as an essential element of disaster reduction, and recommends the implementation of the outcome of the Second International Conference on Early Warning, held at Bonn, Germany, from 16 to 18 October 2003, which highlighted the importance of strengthened coordination and cooperation to integrate activities and expertise of the various sectors involved in the early warning process and has contributed to the review of the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World: Guidelines for Natural Disaster Prevention, Preparedness and Mitigation and its Plan of Action;[3]

7. *Decides* to convene a World Conference on Disaster Reduction in 2005, at the senior-official level, designed to foster specialized discussions and produce concrete changes and results, with the following objectives:

(a) To conclude the review of the Yokohama Strategy and its Plan of Action, with a view to updating the guiding framework on disaster reduction for the twenty-first century;

(b) To identify specific activities aimed at ensuring the implementation of relevant provisions of the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development ("Johannesburg Plan of Implementation")[4] on vulnerability, risk assessment and disaster management;

(c) To share best practices and lessons learned to further disaster reduction within the context of attaining sustainable development and identify gaps and challenges;

(d) To increase awareness of the importance of disaster reduction policies, thereby facilitating and promoting the implementation of those policies;

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[1] A/58/277.

[2] A/57/304, annex.

[3] A/CONF.172/9, chap. I, resolution 1, annex I.

[4] *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 2, annex.

(e) To increase the reliability and availability of appropriate disaster-related information to the public and disaster management agencies in all regions, as set out in the relevant provisions of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation;

8. *Accepts with deep appreciation* the generous offer of the Government of Japan to host the Conference, and decides that the Conference will be held at Kobe, Hyogo, Japan, from 18 to 22 January 2005;

9. *Decides* to establish an open-ended intergovernmental preparatory committee for the Conference to review the organizational and substantive preparations for the Conference, approve the programme of work of the Conference and propose rules of procedure for adoption by the Conference, and also decides that the preparatory committee will meet at Geneva, following the 2004 semi-annual sessions of the Inter-Agency Task Force for Disaster Reduction, for up to two days each time, and that it will hold a one-day meeting at Kobe within the dates mentioned in paragraph 8 above, as necessary;

10. *Also decides* that the intergovernmental preparatory committee will have a bureau consisting of five representatives of Member States elected on the basis of equitable geographical representation;

11. *Invites* regional groups to nominate their candidates for the bureau of the preparatory committee by the end of January 2004, so that they can be involved in the preparations for the first meeting of the preparatory committee, and to notify the secretariat of the Conference of those nominations;

12. *Requests* the inter-agency secretariat for the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction to serve as the secretariat of the Conference and to coordinate preparatory activities, the costs of which will be funded extrabudgetarily through the Trust Fund for the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and in close cooperation with the host country and the preparatory committee for the Conference, with the full support of the relevant departments of the Secretariat;

13. *Understands* that the activities set out in paragraph 12 above will not hinder the other existing work and priorities of the inter-agency secretariat for the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction;

14. *Invites* Member States, all United Nations bodies and specialized agencies and other relevant intergovernmental agencies and organizations, in particular the members of the Inter-Agency Task Force for Disaster Reduction, to participate actively in the Conference, as well as its preparatory process;

15. *Welcomes* contributions from all regions that could provide substantive inputs to the preparatory process and the Conference itself;

16. *Encourages* effective contributions from major groups, as identified in Agenda 21,[5] invites them to seek accreditation to the Conference and its preparatory process, and decides that their accreditation and participation will be in accordance with the rules of procedure of the Commission on Sustainable Development, the rules of procedure of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the

[5] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), vol. I: *Resolutions adopted by the Conference*, resolution 1, annex II.

established practice of the Commission on the participation and engagement of major groups;

17. *Decides* that the actual additional costs of the preparatory process and the Conference itself should be funded through extrabudgetary resources, without negatively affecting programmed activities, and through specific voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund for the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction;

18. *Requests* the United Nations Secretariat to provide conference services for the preparatory process and the Conference itself, the costs thereof to be borne by the host country, on the understanding that the Secretariat will ensure that its existing human resources are utilized to the maximum extent possible, without further charge to the host country;

19. *Encourages* the international community to provide the necessary financial resources to the Trust Fund for the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and to provide the necessary scientific, technical, human and other resources to ensure adequate support for the activities of the inter-agency secretariat for the Strategy and the Inter-Agency Task Force for Disaster Reduction and its working groups, as well as to facilitate the preparations for the Conference;

20. *Expresses* its appreciation to those countries that have provided financial support for the activities of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction by making voluntary contributions to its Trust Fund;

21. *Requests* the Secretary-General to allocate adequate financial and administrative resources, within existing resources, for the effective functioning of the inter-agency secretariat for the Strategy;

22. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session a report on the implementation of the present resolution, in particular on the state of preparations for the World Conference, under the item entitled "Environment and sustainable development".

Draft resolution II
Natural disasters and vulnerability

The General Assembly,

Recalling its decision 57/547 of 20 December 2002,

Taking into account the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the Plan of Implementation[1] of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg Plan of Implementation),[2]

Recognizing the need to continue to develop an understanding of, and to address, socio-economic activities that exacerbate the vulnerability of societies to natural disasters and to build and further strengthen community capacity to cope with disaster risks,

Noting that the global environment continues to suffer degradation, adding to economic and social vulnerabilities, in particular of developing countries,

Taking into account the various ways and forms in which all countries, in particular the more vulnerable developing countries, are affected by severe natural hazards, such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and extreme weather events such as heatwaves, severe droughts, floods and storms, and El Niño/La Niña events, which have global reach,

Expressing deep concern at the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events and associated natural disasters,

Expressing deep concern also at the enormous negative impact of severe natural hazards, including extreme weather events and associated natural disasters, which continues to hinder social and economic progress, in particular of developing countries,

Reiterating that, although natural disasters damage the social and economic infrastructure of all countries, the long-term consequences of natural disasters are especially severe in developing countries and hamper the achievement of their sustainable development,

Stressing that national authorities need to undertake disaster preparedness and mitigation efforts, in particular through the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, so as to enhance the resilience of populations to disasters and reduce the risks to them, their livelihoods, the social and economic infrastructure and environmental resources,

Recalling that the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction provides a framework for collaboration on the development of methodologies to systematically characterize, measure, assess and respond to natural disasters, including weather-related disasters, hazards and vulnerabilities,

Taking into account the fact that extreme weather events and associated natural disasters and their reduction must be dealt with in a coherent manner,

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[1] *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

[2] Ibid., resolution 2, annex.

Noting the need for international cooperation to increase the capacity of countries to respond to the negative impacts of all natural hazards, including extreme weather events and associated natural disasters, particularly in developing countries,

Emphasizing the importance of raising awareness among developing countries of the capacities existing at the national, regional and international levels that could be deployed to assist them,

Taking note of the outcome of the Second International Conference on Early Warning, held in Bonn, Germany, from 16 to 18 October 2003,

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction,[3] in particular the section on the negative impacts of extreme weather events and associated natural disasters on vulnerable countries, in particular developing countries, as requested by the General Assembly in its decision 57/547 of 20 December 2002;

2. *Urges* the international community to continue to address ways and means, including through cooperation and technical assistance, to reduce the adverse effects of natural disasters, including those caused by extreme weather events, in particular in vulnerable developing countries, through the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, and encourages the Inter-Agency Task Force for Disaster Reduction to continue its work in this regard;

3. *Encourages* Governments to establish effective national platforms or focal points for disaster reduction, and to strengthen them where they already exist;

4. *Also encourages* Governments, in cooperation with the United Nations system and other stakeholders, to strengthen capacity-building in the most vulnerable regions, to enable them to address the socio-economic factors that increase vulnerability, and encourages the international community to provide effective assistance to developing countries in this regard;

5. *Encourages* the Inter-Agency Task Force for Disaster Reduction to enhance the coordination on the promotion of disaster reduction as well as to make available to the relevant United Nations entities information on options for natural disaster reduction, including severe natural hazards and extreme weather-related disasters and vulnerabilities;

6. *Encourages* the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change[4] and the parties to the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change[5] to continue to address the adverse effects of climate change, especially in those developing countries that are particularly vulnerable, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, and also encourages the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to continue to assess the adverse effects of climate change on the socio-economic and natural disaster reduction systems of developing countries;

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[3] A/58/277.

[4] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1771, No. 30822.

[5] FCCC/CP/1997/7/Add.1, decision 1/CP.3, annex.

7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session on the implementation of the present resolution in a separate section of his report on the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, and decides to consider the issue of natural disasters and vulnerability at that session, under the sub-item "International Strategy for Disaster Reduction" of the item entitled "Environment and sustainable development".